

## Ancient Forms of {Pre-Islamic} Pagan Worship

pp. 1612-1623 of *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary* by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, [1946]

( This is a short excerpt from an appendix to an English translation of the Qur'an, which describes the pagan beliefs in the Arabian peninsula prior to the rise of Islam. It is written by a devout Muslim, so this point of view is evident throughout.)

This is one of the few treatments of this fascinating but little-understood subject which I have found. I have appended the translation and notes for the portion of the Qur'an (Surah lxxi.) mentioned in the body of the appendix. This is also of interest because it gives the Islamic take on the story of Noah. In verse 23 of this Surah, five pre-Islamic pagan deities are mentioned by name: Wadd, Suwâ`, Yagûth, Ya`ûq and Nasr. Believers in the existence of the Necronomicon (itself purportedly a mediaeval Arabic document) will take note of Yagûth in this list. In the appendix, Ali also describes a trinity of pre-Islamic goddesses: Lât, `Uzzâ, and Manât; this information will be of interest to Wiccans.

Note that the appendix, from p. 1619-23 in the original book, is first in this document, followed by the excerpt from the Qur'an, p. 1612-8, so the page numbering below is out of order.--*jbh*}

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### APPENDIX XIII.

From prehistoric times man has sought to worship powers of nature, or symbols representing those powers, or idols representing those symbols. In vulgar minds they become debased superstitions, and seem to come into competition with the worship of the one True God.

2. The five names mentioned in lxxi. 23 represent some of the oldest Pagan cults, before the Flood as well as after the Flood, though the names themselves are in the form in which they were worshipped by local Arab tribes. The names of the tribes have been preserved to us by the Commentators, but they are of no more than archæological interest to us now. But the names of the false gods are interesting to us from the point of view of comparative religion, as, under one form or another, such cults still exist in countries which have not accepted the Gospel of Unity, as they have always existed since man turned from his Maker and Sustainer to the worship of created things or invented fancies.

3. The names of the five false gods and the symbols under which they were represented were as follows:--

*Pagan god*  
1. Wadd  
2. Suwâ`,  
3. Yagûth  
4. Ya`ûq  
5. Nasr

*Shape.*  
Man  
Woman  
Lion (or Bull)  
Horse  
Eagle, or Vulture, or Falcon.

*Quality represented*  
Manly Power.  
Mutability, Beauty.  
Brute Strength.  
Swiftness.  
Sharp Sight, Insight.

It is not clear whether these names are to be connected with true Arabic verbal roots or are merely Arabicised forms of names derived from foreign cults, such as those of Babylonia or Assyria, the region of Noah's Flood. The latter supposition is probable. Even in the case of *Wadd* (Affection, Love) and *Nasr* (Eagle), which are good Arabic words, it is doubtful whether they are not, in this connection, translations or corruptions of words denoting foreign cults.

4. In studying ancient comparative mythologies we must never forget the following facts. (1) Men's ideas of God always tend to be anthropomorphic. The qualities which they admire they transfer to their godhead. (2) But fear in primitive man also leads to the transfer of anything mysterious or imagined to be injurious, to the Pantheon. Such things have to be placated in order that they may not injure man. Thus in popular Hinduism the goddess of small-pox, which causes terror over an ignorant countryside, has to be worshipped, placated, or appeased with sacrifice. (3) This leads to the worship of animals noxious to man, such as serpent-worship, which

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has prevailed and still prevails in many primitive areas. In ancient Egyptian mythology the Crocodile (so common in the Nile), the Dog, the Bull, and the Ibis were worshipped both literally and symbolically. See Appendix V, p. 409. (4) But as men's knowledge grows, and they observe the wonderful heavenly bodies and their motions, they begin to feel their sublimity, beauty and mystery, and they transfer their worship to the heavenly bodies. The first great astronomers in the ancient world were the Babylonians and Chaldæans. Among them was Abraham's homeland. The allegory of Abraham (vi, 74-82 and notes) points to the importance of the cult of the worship of heavenly bodies and the fallacy in them. "It is those who believe, and confuse not their beliefs with wrong-that are truly in security, for they are on right guidance" (vi. 82). The Sabæan worship of heavenly bodies in Arabia had probably its source in Chaldæa (see last paragraph of n. 76 to ii. 62). (5) A further refined step in Paganism is to worship abstractions, to treat concrete things as symbols of abstract qualities which they represent. For example, the planet Saturn with its slow motion was treated as phlegmatic and evil. The planet Mars with its fiery red light was treated as betokening war and havoc and evil, and so on. Jupiter, with its magnificent golden light, was treated as lucky and benignant to any who came tinder its influence. Venus became the symbol and the goddess of carnal love. The Pagan Arabs erected Time (*Dahr*) into a deity, existing from eternity to eternity, and dispensing good and ill fortune to men. The ancient Ægean religion treated the vital principle in the same way, as spontaneous and eternal, and traces of this are found in many religions, ancient and modern. (6) The next step was to incarnate as it were these qualities in beings of flesh and blood, with lives, feelings, and passions like those of ordinary men and women, and to fill up a confused Pantheon with gods and goddesses that quarrelled, hated, loved, were jealous, and suffered or enjoyed life like human beings. In such a Pantheon there was room for demi-gods and real human heroes that were worshipped as gods. The Greek poets and artists were past masters in carrying out this process, under cover of which they discussed profound human problems, with great power. They made religion dramatic. While they gained in humanism, they lost the purer spiritual conceptions which lift the divine world far above the futilities and crimes of this

life. Hierarchical Christianity has suffered from this inheritance of the Greek tradition. (7) Where there was a commingling of peoples and cultures, several of these ideas and processes got mixed up together. Gods and goddesses of different origins were identified one with another, *e.g.* Artemis, the chaste virgin huntress goddess of the Greek Pantheon, was identified with Diana of the Romans, Diana of the Ephesians (representing the teeming life of nature), and Selene the cold moon-goddess. Similarly Diana was identified with the Egyptian Isis, and Diana's twin-brother Apollo (the sun) with the Egyptian Osiris. Forces of nature, animals, trees, qualities, astronomical bodies, and various other factors got mixed up together, and formed a shapeless medley of superstitions, which are all condemned by Islam.

5. To revert to the worship of the heavenly bodies. The countless fixed stars in the firmament occupied always the same relative positions in the heavens, and did not impress the imagination of the ancients like the objects which stood out vividly with mysterious laws of relative motion. A few individual stars did attract the worshippers' attention; *e.g.* Sirius the Dog-star, the brightest fixed star in the heavens, with a bluish tinge in its light, and Algol the variable star, being Beta of the constellation

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Perseus, whose variations can be perceived by the naked eye in two or three nights, became connected with many legends, myths, and superstitions. It is probably Sirius that is referred to as the fixed star in the Parable of Abraham (vi. 76). With regard to the fixed stars in their myriads, the astronomers turned their fancy to devising Groups or Constellations. But the moving "stars", or planets, each with its own individual laws of motion, stood out to them personified, each with a motion and therefore will or influence of its own. As they knew and understood them, they were seven in number, *viz.*: (1) and (2) the moon and the Sun, the two objects which most closely and indubitably influence the tides, the temperatures, and the life on our planet; (3) and (4) the two inner planets, Mercury and Venus, which are morning and evening stars, and never travel far from the sun; and (5), (6), and (7) Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, the outer planets, whose elongations from the sun on the ecliptic can be as wide as possible. The number seven became itself a mystic number, as explained in n. 5526 to lxx. 12.

6. It will be noticed that the sun and the moon and the five planets got identified each with a living deity, god or goddess, with characteristics and qualities of its own. The solar myth was a myth of very fruitful vitality, and got mixed up with many other myths and ideas. In late Roman religion it appears in the story of Apollo, the sun-god of light and learning and of manly beauty, twin brother to Diana the moon. goddess. In ancient Egypt it appears in the myth of Horus, the falcon-eyed, or of Ra or Rê, the Eye, which sees all things. Further, the eagle, or falcon, or hawk, became itself identified with the sun, with its piercing light. The sun myth mixes itself up with the myth of the Nile and with the cycle of legends connected with Isis and Osiris, who were subsequently identified with the moon and the sun divinities. In Babylon the name Shamash (Arabic, *Shams*) proclaims the glory of the sun-god corresponding to the old Sumerian Utu or Babbar, while the hymns to Sûrya (the sun) in the Rig-Veda and the cult of Mithra in Persia proclaim the dominance of sun-worship.

7. Moon-worship was equally popular in various forms. I have already referred to the classical legends of Apollo and Diana, twin brother and sister, representing the sun and the moon. The Egyptian Khonsu, traversing the sky in a boat, referred to the moon, and the moon legends also got mixed up with those about the god of magic, Thoth, and the Ibis. In the Vedic religion of India the moon-god was Soma, the lord of the planets, and the name was also applied to the juice which was the drink of the gods. It may be noted that the moon was a male divinity in ancient India; it was also a male divinity in ancient Semitic religion, and the Arabic word for the moon (*qamar*) is of the masculine gender. On the other hand, the Arabic word for the sun (*shams*) is of the feminine gender. The Pagan Arabs evidently looked upon the sun as a goddess and the moon as a god.

8. Of the five planets, perhaps Venus as the evening star and the morning star alternately impressed itself most on the imagination of astro-mythology. This planet was in different places considered both male and female. In the Bible (Isaiah, xiv. 12), the words "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" are understood to refer to the Morning Star in the first instance, and by analogy to the King of Babylon. The Fathers of the Christian Church, on the other hand, transferred the name Lucifer to Satan, the power of evil. Mercury is a less conspicuous planet, and was looked upon as a child in the family, the father and mother being the moon and the sun, or the sun

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and the moon (according to the sex attributed to these divinities), or else either the sun or the moon was the father and Venus the mother (the sexes being inter-changeable in the myths). Of the three outer planets, Jupiter is the most conspicuous: indeed, after the sun and the moon, it is the most conspicuous object in the heavens, and was reputed to be beneficent and to bestow good fortune. The sun and the moon being considered in a class apart, Jupiter was considered the father of the planets, and possibly his worship got occasionally mixed up with that of the sun. Mars and Saturn, as has already been stated, were considered malevolent planets, to be feared for the mischief that they might do; for the Pagan Pantheons worshipped powers both of good and evil.

9. It is remarkable that the days of the week are named after the seven planets of geocentric astronomy, and if we take them in alternate sequence they indicate the order in which their heavens were arranged with reference to proximity to the earth. The following table represents this grouping:--

<i>Planet</i>	<i>Presiding god or goddess</i>	<i>Day of the week in alternate sequence</i>
Moon	Diana	Sunday
Mercury	Mercury	Tuesday
Venus	Venus	Thursday
The Sun	Apollo	Saturday
Mars	Mars	Monday
Jupiter	Jupiter	Wednesday
Saturn	Saturn	Friday

This alternate sequence is carried into a circle, as the total number is seven, itself a mystic number.

10. These cross-currents and mixtures of nature-worship, astral-worship, hero-worship, worship of abstract qualities, etc., resulted in a medley of debasing superstitions which are summed up in the five names, Wadd, Suwâ`, Yagûth, Ya`ûq, and Nasr, as noted in paragraph 3 above. The time of Noah is taken to be the peak of superstition and false worship, and the most ancient cults may thus be symbolically brought under these heads. If Wadd and Suwâ` represented Man and Woman, they might well represent the astral-worship of the moon and the sun, or the sun and the moon, or they might represent human self-glorification, the worship of Self as against God, or they might represent the worship of Manly Power and Female Beauty, or other abstract qualities of that kind. On the other hand, it is possible that the worship of Jupiter and Venus itself got mixed up with the worship of the sun-moon pair. One pair being identified with another pair in a Septet, the number seven was reduced to five, and the five (itself a mystic number) might itself represent the seven planets as then worshipped. Further, it may be that Nasr (the vulture, falcon, hawk, or eagle, the Egyptian Horus) also represents a solar myth, mixed up with the cult of the planets. These cross-currents of astro-mythological mixtures of cults are well-known to students of ancient popular religions. If the five names, from another angle of vision, represent qualities, the Wadd-Suwâ` pair (Sun-Moon, Jupiter-Venus) would represent manly power and womanly beauty or mutability respectively, and the three remaining ones (paragraph 3) might represent Brute Strength, like that of a Bull or a Lion; Swiftness like that of a Horse or sharpness (of sight or intelligence) like that of a vulture, hawk, or eagle.

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11. It may be noted that the five names of deities mentioned here to represent very ancient religious cults are well-chosen. They are not the names of the deities best known in Mecca, but rather those which survived as fragments of very ancient cults among the outlying tribes of Arabia, which were influenced by the cults of Mesopotamia (Noah's country). The Pagan deities best known in the Ka`ba and round about Mecca were Lât, `Uzzâ, and Manât. (Manât was also known round Yathrib, which afterwards became Medina.) See liii. 19-20. They were all female goddesses. Lât almost certainly represents another wave of sun-worship: the sun being feminine in Arabic and in Semitic languages generally. "Lât" may be the original of the Greek "Leto", the mother of Apollo the sun-god (*Encyclopædia of Islam*, I., p. 380). If so, the name was brought in prehistoric times from South Arabia by the great Incense Route (n. 3816 to xxxiv. 18) to the Mediterranean. `Uzzâ probably represents the planet Venus. The origin of Manât is not quite clear, but it would not be surprising if it also turned out to be astral. The 360 idols established by the Pagans in the Ka`ba probably represented the 360 days of an inaccurate solar year. This was the actual "modern" Pagan worship as known to the Quraish contemporary with our Prophet. In sharp contrast to this is mentioned the ancient antediluvian worship under five heads, of which fragments persisted in outlying places, as they still persist in different forms and under different names in all parts of the world where the pure worship of God in unity and truth is not firmly established in the minds and hearts of men.

*References:* The classical work on Arabian idol-worship is Ibn al-Kalbi's *Kitrâb-ul-asnâm*, of the late second century of the Hijra. The book is not easily accessible. Our

doctors of religion have evinced no interest in the study of ancient cults, or in comparative religion, and most of them had not before them the results of modern archæology. But a modern school of Egyptian archæologists is arising, which takes a great deal of interest in the antiquities of their own country. For astral worship consult Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, articles on "Sun, Moon, and Stars," as worshipped in different countries. Consult also Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, London 1904; A. H. Sayce, *Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia*, Gifford Lectures, Edinburgh 1902; M. Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, Boston 1898; E. W. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, London 1896; G. A. Barton, *Sketches of Semitic Origins*, New York 1902. Any Classical Dictionary would give details of Greek and Roman Mythology. It is curious that the Indus Civilization, which resembles the Second Pre-diluvian Culture of Elam and Mesopotamia, does not clearly disclose any signs of astral worship. But this study is still in its tentative stage. There is tree and animal worship, phallic worship, and the worship of the great Mother-goddess. Animal worship regards strength, courage, virility, or swiftness, as in the Pagan Arabian deities we have been considering. See Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo Daro and the Indus Civilization*, 3 vols. London 1931.

Sir J. G. Frazer, in his *Adonis, Attis, and Osiris* (4th ed., London 1914, Vol. I, pp. 8-9) refers to *Allatu* or Eresh-Kigal as "the stern queen of the infernal regions" in Babylonian religion: she was the goddess of the nether regions, of darkness and desolation, as her counterpart Ishtar was the chief goddess of the upper regions, of reproduction and fertility, associated with the planet Venus.

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### INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SÛRA LXXI (Nûh).

This is another early Meccan Sûra, of which the date has no significance. The theme is that while Good must uphold the standard of Truth and Righteousness, a stage is reached when it must definitely part company with Evil, lest Evil should spread its corruption abroad. This theme is embodied in the prayer of Noah just before the Flood. The story of Noah's agony is almost a Parable for the holy Prophet's persecution in the Meccan period.

C. 251. (lxxi. 1-28.).--

The Prophet's Message, as was that of Noah,  
Is a warning against sin, and the Good News of Mercy  
Through the door of Repentance: for God is loving  
And long-suffering, and His Signs are within us  
And around us. But the sinners are obstinate:  
They plot against Righteousness, and place their trust  
In futile falsehoods. They will be swept away,  
And the earth will be purged of Evil. Let us  
Pray for Mercy and Grace for ourselves,  
For those nearest and dearest to us,  
And for all who turn in faith to God,  
In all ages and all countries,

And amongst all Peoples.

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## **Sûra LXXI.**

### ***Nûh*, or Noah.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. We sent Noah[5705]  
To his People  
(With the Command)  
"Do thou warn thy People  
Before there comes to them  
A grievous Penalty."

2. He said: "O my People!  
I am to you  
A Warner, clear and open:[5706]

3. "That ye should worship  
God, fear Him,  
And obey me:"[5707]

4. "So He may forgive you  
Your sins and give you  
Respite for a stated Term:  
For when the Term given  
by God is accomplished,  
It cannot be put forward  
If ye only knew."

5. He said: "O my Lord!  
I have called to my People  
Night and day:

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6. "But my call only  
Increases (their) flight  
(From the Right).[5700]

7. "And every time I have  
Called to them, that Thou  
Mightest forgive them,  
They have (only) thrust  
Their fingers into their ears,  
Covered themselves up with[5710]  
Their garments, grown obstinate,

And given themselves up  
To arrogance.

8. "So I have called to them  
Aloud;

9. "Further I have spoken  
To them in public[5711]  
And secretly in private,

10. "Saying, 'Ask forgiveness  
From your Lord;  
For He is Oft-Forgiving;

11. "'He will send rain"[5712]  
To you in abundance;

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12. "'Give you increase  
In wealth and sons;  
And bestow on you  
Gardens and bestow on you  
Rivers (of flowing water).[5713]

13. "'What is the matter  
With you, that ye  
Place not your hope  
For kindness and long-suffering  
In God,--

14. Seeing that it is  
He That has created you  
In diverse stages?[5714]

15. "'See ye not  
How God has created  
The seven heavens  
One above another,[5715]

16. "'And made the moon  
A light in their midst,  
And made the sun  
As a (Glorious) Lamp?[5716]

17. "'And God has produced  
You from the earth,  
Growing (gradually),[5717]

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18. "And in the End  
He will return you  
Into the (earth),  
And raise you forth  
(Again at the Resurrection)?

19. "And God has made  
The earth for you  
As a carpet (spread out),[5718]

20. "That ye may go about  
Therein, in spacious roads."[5719]

## SECTION 2.

21. Noah said: "O my Lord!  
They have disobeyed me,  
But they follow (men) [5731-A]  
Whose wealth and children  
Give them no Increase  
But only Loss.

22. "And they have devised  
A tremendous Plot.[5720]

23. "And they have said  
(To each other),  
'Abandon not your gods:[5791]  
Abandon neither Wadd  
Nor Suwâ`, neither  
Yagûth nor Ya`ûq,  
Nor Nasr';--

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24. "They have already  
Misled many; and  
Grant Thou no increase  
To the wrong-doers but in  
Straying (from their mark).[5722]

25. Because of their sins  
They were drowned  
(In the flood),[5723]  
And were made to enter  
The Fire (of Punishment):  
And they found--  
In lieu of God--  
None to help them.

26. And Noah said:  
"O my Lord! Leave not  
Of the Unbelievers,  
A single one on earth! [5724]

27. "For, if Thou dost leave  
(Any of) them, they will  
But mislead Thy devotees,  
And they will breed none  
But wicked ungrateful ones.

28. "O my Lord!  
Forgive me,  
My parents, all who  
Enter my house in  
Faith, And (all) believing men

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And believing women; [5725]  
And to the wrong-doers  
Grant Thou no increase  
But in Perdition! [5726]

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[5705. Noah's mission is referred to in many places. See specially xl. 25-49 and notes. His contemporaries had completely abandoned the moral law. A purge had. to be made, and the great Flood made it. This gives a new starting point in history for Noah's People,--i.e. for the remnant saved in the Ark.

5706. His Warning was to be both clear (i.e. unambiguous) and open (i.e. publicly proclaimed). Both these meanings are implied in Mubîn. Cf. lxvii. 26. The meaning of the Warning was obviously that if they had repented, they would have obtained mercy.

5707. Three aspects of man's duty are emphasized: (1) true worship with heart and soul; (2) God-fearing recognition that all evil must lead to self-deterioration and judgment; (3) hence repentance and amendment of life. and obedience to good men's counsels.

5708. God gives respite freely; but it is for Him to give it. His command is definite and final; neither man nor any other authority can alter or in any way modify it. If we could only realise this to the full in our inmost soul, it would be best for us and lead to our happiness.]

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[5709. When convincing arguments and warnings are placed before sinners, there are two kinds of reactions. Those who are wise receive admonition, repent, and bring forth fruits of repentance, i.e. amend their lives and turn to God. On the other hand, those who are callous to any advice take it up as a reproach, fly farther and farther from righteousness, and shut out more and more the channels through which God's healing Grace can reach them and work for them.

5710. The literal meaning would be that, just as they thrust their fingers into their ears to prevent the voice of the admonisher reaching them, so they covered their bodies with their garments that the light of truth should not penetrate to them. and that they should not even be seen by the Preacher. But there is a further

symbolic meaning. "Their garments" are the adornments of vanities, their evil habits, customs, and traditions. and their ephemeral interests and standards. They drew them closer round them to prevent the higher Light reaching them. They grew obstinate and gave themselves up to the grossest form of selfish arrogance.

5711. Noah used all the resources of the earnest preacher: he dinned the Message of God into their ears; he spoke in public places; and he took individuals into his confidence, and appealed privately to them; but all in vain.

5712. They had perhaps been suffering from drought or famine. If they had taken the message in the right way, the rain would have been a blessing to them. They took it in the wrong way. and the rain was a curse to them, for it flooded the country and drowned the wicked generation. In the larger Plan, it was a blessing all the same; for it purged the world, and gave it a new start, morally and spiritually.]

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[5713. Each of these blessings--rain and crops, wealth and man-power. flourishing gardens, and perennial streams--are indications of prosperity, and have not only a material but also a spiritual meaning. Note the last point, "rivers of flowing water". The perennial springs make the prosperity as it were permanent: they indicate a settled population, honest and contented, and enjoying their blessings here on earth as the foretaste of the eternal joys of heaven.

5714. Cf. xxii. 5, and notes 2773-2777; also xxiii. 12-17, and notes 2872-2875. The meaning here may be even wider. Man in his various states exhibits various wonderful qualities or capacities. mental and spiritual, that may be compared with the wonderful workings of nature on the earth and in the heavens. Will he not then be grateful for these Mercies and turn to God, Who created all these marvels?

5715. See n. 5559 to lxvii. 3.

5716. Cf. xxv. 61, where the sun is referred to as the glorious Lamp of the heavens: "Blessed is He Who made the Constellations in the skies, and placed therein a lamp, and a moon giving light."

5717. Cf. iii. 37, where the growth of the child Mary the Mother of Jesus is described by the same word *nabât*, ordinarily denoting the growth of plants and trees. The simile is that of a seed sown, that germinates, grows, and dies, and goes back to the earth. In man, there is the further process of the Resurrection. Cf. also xx. 55.]

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[5718. Cf. xx. 53,

5719. *Fijâj* implies valley-roads or passes between mountains. Though there are mountain chains on the earth, God's artistry has provided even in such regions, valleys and channels by which men may go about. Mountain roads usually follow the valleys.

5719-A. Sinners always resent it as a reproach that righteous men should speak to them for their own good. They prefer smooth flatterers, and they worship power even though the depositaries of power are selfish men, who neither profit themselves nor profit others by the wealth and man-power that they collect round themselves. They forget that mere material things may be a delusion and a snare unless the moral and spiritual factor behind them sanctifies them.

5720. Having got material resources. the wicked devise plots to get rid of the righteous whose presence is a reproach to them, For a time their plots may seem tremendous and have the appearance of success, but they can never defeat God's Purpose.

5721. For an account of how these Pagan gods and superstitions connected with them originated, and how they became adopted into the Arabian Pagan Pantheon, see Appendix XIII at the end of this Sûra, pp.

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[5722. Such Pagan superstitions and cults do not add to human knowledge or human well-being. They only increase error and wrong-doing. For example, how much lewdness resulted from the Greek and Roman Saturnalia! And how much lewdness results from ribald Holt songs! This is the natural result, and Noah in his bitterness of spirit prays that God's grace may be cut off from men who hug them to their hearts. They mislead others: let them miss their own mark! See also verse 28 below.

5723. The Punishment of sin seizes the soul from every side and in every form. Water (drowning) indicates death by suffocation, through the nose, ears, eyes, mouth, throat, and lungs. Fire has the opposite effects: it burns the skin, the limbs, the flesh, the brains, the bones, and every part of the body. So the destruction wrought by sin is complete from all points of view. And yet it is not death (xx. 74); for death would be a merciful release from the Penalty, and the soul steeped in sin has closed the gates of God's Mercy on itself. There they will abide, unless and "except as God willeth" (vi. 128). For time and eternity, as we conceive them now, have no meaning in the wholly new world which the soul enters after death or judgment.

5724. The Flood was sent in order to purge all sin. The prayer of Noah is not vindictive. it simply means, "Cut off all the roots of sin ". See next note.]

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[5723. Indeed he prays for himself, his parents, his guests, and all who in earnest faith turn to God, in all ages and in all places. Praying for their forgiveness is also praying for the destruction of sin.

5726. This is slightly different in form from verse 24 above, where see n. 5722. See also last note.]